

(NOTE: The initial pre-deployment press release will be based on the unclassified cover story which follows; it will contain only a portion of the information outlined below. Answers to subsequent press queries will be based on the fuller details which follow, but will not go beyond.)

UNCLASSIFIED COVER STORY

Around mid-1954 Lockheed Aircraft Corporation initiated independently the construction of a high-altitude, single-engine jet aircraft. The aircraft, powered by a Pratt & Whitney J-57 engine, operates in the mid-subsonic speed range and up to altitudes of 55,000 feet; it has a low wing loading with a capability of extended operation at high altitudes. While having no combat or tactical significance, the aircraft's performance makes it a more suitable and economic vehicle (as compared with tactical types) for carrying out high-altitude research. Lockheed planned both to use the prototype model as a test bed or "platform" for carrying out a variety of its own experimental activities, and to interest the military in the aircraft as a vehicle for conducting research and experimental tests of their own. LAC carried out the development and testing of its experimental aircraft in consultation with NACA (National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics). Overcoming of fuel control problems was one of the areas in which NACA rendered assistance.

Although Lockheed developed the first experimental prototype on its own initiative, the USAF monitored the Lockheed development and had observers present during the aircraft's initial test flights. The aircraft's performance gave rise to USAF interest in a limited procurement

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contract. The high altitude performance of the aircraft made it a suitable vehicle for use in a [REDACTED] test program. Contractual negotiations between Lockheed and the USAF proceeded rapidly; first deliveries were made late in 1955.

Early in 1956, the NACA, relying in part on its knowledge of the U-2 aircraft, began planning for an atmospheric research program of broad interest to U.S. aeronautical science, both civilian and military. NACA, original promoter of the program, has not only provided guidance in the development of the aircraft and of equipment and instrumentation required to perform the research mission but will coordinate the exploitation and dissemination of the scientific results obtained. The primary objective of NACA's program is the gathering of meteorological data, e.g., turbulence associated with the jet stream and convective clouds, temperature and wind structures at jet levels, etc., at altitudes up to 55,000 feet--data which would assist in the development of new forecasting techniques and provide climatological background for meteorological research by governmental and private agencies and institutions in the United States. Widespread but simultaneous weather observations from various points in the Northern Hemisphere will enable an integrated study of high altitude phenomena which is expected to be of particular value. NACA considered the newly-procured U-2 the most suitable vehicle for carrying out its research program. The USAF agreed to make available a limited number of U-2's to NACA since the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] test program is intermittent in nature and NACA's program is considered of definite interest to the USAF, particularly the Air Weather Service.

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Pilots employed in the NACA program are civilians hired and trained by IAC and made available to NACA specifically for the latter's research activities. NACA could not afford to draw upon its limited and already heavily committed group of test pilots. Lockheed also was unable to spare pilot personnel for the program, but did undertake the hiring and training of highly-qualified civilians, most of whom are ex-service airmen with jet experience.

These activities will be conducted both in the United States and abroad. Since NACA does not have independent facilities for conducting test programs abroad, the overseas program will be organized as a "joint task force" based at USAF installations and supported by appropriate USAF major commands. The Air Weather Service will act as USAF "executive agent" in support of NACA activities, and will activate provisional units to give operational direction and render direct support to NACA. The Weather Reconnaissance Squadron, Provisional, (1st) has recently been activated to support the initial NACA research team now being assembled. [REDACTED]

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